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Introduction

Entrepreneurship in Africa, Part 1: Entrepreneurial Dynamics in Africa

This special issue was motivated by the desire to offer fresh and current insights into African Entrepreneurship and to provide a voice for African scholars doing research in entrepreneurship and small business development. The phenomenon of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour in the developed world is well represented in the academic literature. Interestingly, however, research focussing on entrepreneurial behaviour and small business practice on the African continent is less prominent, especially within the leading international journals (see George et al., 2016). The entrepreneurial dynamic in Africa is rapidly evolving in the face of continual socio-economic, political, technological and cultural changes sweeping the continent (Fine, 1997).

There is widespread recognition regarding the urgent need for effective entrepreneurial behaviour to alleviate a myriad of systemic problems, including high graduate unemployment, endemic poverty, economic growth inequality, corruption, excessive bureaucracy, ineffective infrastructure and a lack of enterprise support mechanisms (Le Pere and Ikome, 2009). Moreover, research into entrepreneurial behaviours remains limited in the complex and heterogeneous African cultural context (George et al., 2016). Thus, this set of three interrelated special issues set out to provide novel and empirically rigorous insights into a range of under reported and emerging topics in an African context, including: reporting aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour described in Issue 1 as entrepreneurial dynamics, the development of entrepreneurial education and eco-systems to support entrepreneurial activity in Issue 2, and entrepreneurial growth and diversity, in Issue 3.

It was rewarding to note the range of entrepreneurial behaviour being reported, including social enterprise, the emergence and deployment of information and communication technology and the use of micro-finance to enable business start-up. In addition, we note the significant investment in entrepreneurial education and eco-systems to encourage start-ups and effective entrepreneurial learning, despite ongoing resources challenges and issues appertaining to business sustainability and failure (Sheriff and Muffatto, 2016).

The current issue of the Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development sees the publication of Part 1 of the special issue on Entrepreneurship in Africa. The special issue proved to be a considerable undertaking with over 60 papers received during the call promotion. This statistic reflects the popularity of entrepreneurship in an African context. After a rigorous and lengthy review process, a total of 25 papers were accepted for publication. It was noteworthy to see that papers were submitting from all across the African continent, confirming the increased interest in entrepreneurial activity research. As a result, the special issue was split between three separate issues of the journal, for publication during 2018

This first issue, presented here, entitled “Entrepreneurial Dynamics in Africa”, includes 9 articles which explore various aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour including: female entrepreneurship, venture capital, information and communication technology and the influence of entrepreneurial leadership.

The study by Struthers and Nziku presents the development of an innovative taxonomy which highlights the role of Strength of Weak Ties (SWT) social networks towards mitigating the Principal-Agent problem among African women entrepreneurs. The taxonomy presents new insights for understanding the constraints that inhibit women entrepreneurs in Africa.

Embedding the SWT concept within a Principal-Agent framework will facilitate further research to understand African women entrepreneurs' attitudes towards risk and uncertainty. This will facilitate greater understanding of the importance that African women entrepreneurs attach to incentives within their businesses.

Gudeta and van Engen's study explores work-life boundary management experiences and the challenges women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia face in combining their work-life responsibilities. The study contributes to the work-family literature by highlighting contextual and environmental factors imposing work-family boundary management styles on women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia. The research underlines the requirement to recognise the work-life interface challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and to develop educational programmes and specific training to assist them in adopting better work-life boundary management tactics. The findings inform policies and women entrepreneurship development programmes designed by government, development partners and other stakeholders.

Rabi's study explores factors influencing growth intention of female owned small businesses in Ghana's tourism sector. The study investigates why some female entrepreneurs achieve growth while others do not. The research reveals that female tourism entrepreneurs in Ghana feel they can expand without entrepreneurial ability. However, venture growth is restricted by lack of financial resources. Opportunities in the tourism sector generate increased customers, but do not determine growth intentions. Business advisory services do not appear to contribute significantly to the growth intention of the venture. This research suggests that pursuance of growth is related to different types of opportunities and finance leveraging. This study is relevant for government, business agencies, and academics regarding why female Ghanaian entrepreneurs have low growth intention. Policy recommendations are provided in assisting women in achieving growth aspirational requirements in small tourism businesses. The study contributes to improve socio-economic status of women entrepreneurs in Africa and addresses issues relating to their growth intention.

The Adom et al study critically evaluates how work and the family life of female entrepreneurs in emerging Sub-Saharan countries, including Ghana, influences business performance. The findings revealed that female entrepreneurs typically believed that their roles and responsibilities to their families have a negative impact on both the income they generate from their business and their willingness to expand their outlets. However, it has a positive impact on their willingness to employ additional employees in their businesses. Thus, this study reveals that quality of family life is essential to these female entrepreneurs and that they are willing to put the well-being of their families first, even at the expense of business growth. However, there exist other critical issues which affect women entrepreneurs in the sub-Saharan region that can be explored to provide more insights on this subject or in different contexts.

The Anderson et al study considers the problem of why the poorest, most disadvantaged groups such as rural African women benefit less from microfinance. The study focuses on the perception and experiences of rural entrepreneurial women on microfinance, in a context of extreme poverty and where family responsibility and economic activities are closely intertwined. The study offers a number of relevant implications. In terms of theoretical implications, existing theories, especially functionalist economic theory, do not take account of microfinance user's experiences. For practical implications, microfinance providers should

note that the poorest perceive microcredit differently and seek to reduce the intimidating barriers. Instead of offering a process for the poor to alleviate poverty, or coping strategies to manage cash flows and risks, microfinance causes fear and anxiety by demanding high return rates in a short time period. Consequently, the poorest members of society, who should be the beneficiaries of microfinance, are less likely to benefit. Importantly, the condition of poverty creates different realities for those in severe poverty.

Hain and Jurowetzki study considers the patterns and characteristics of international financial flows into the emerging entrepreneurial ecosystems of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), providing a novel taxonomy to classify and analyze them, and discusses how such investments contribute to competence building and sustainable development. The study observes a new type of mainly Western investors that support innovative ideas in SSA by identification of and investing in domestically developed technical innovations with the potential to address global market needs. Such innovations are developed at the intersection of global and local knowledge. The study offers a novel taxonomy of technology investments in low-income countries, offering further research opportunities.

The study by Ngoasong explores how context as an antecedent to entrepreneurial digital competencies (EDCs) influences digital entrepreneurship in a resource-scarce environment. The data comprises semi-structured interviews with digital entrepreneurs, as owner-managers of digital businesses in Cameroon. The results reveal the ways in which EDCs shape the entry (or start-up) choices and post-entry strategic decisions of digital entrepreneurs in response to context-specific opportunities and challenges associated with digital entrepreneurship. This study highlights important implications for encouraging digital entrepreneurship by focusing on institutional, technology and local dimensions of context and measures to develop the entrepreneurial and digital competencies. This includes policy interventions to develop the information and communication technology infrastructure, transport and local distribution infrastructure, and training opportunities to develop the EDCs of digital entrepreneurs.

Shemi and Procter consider the application of mobile devices, and how social media networks (SMN), such as Facebook, have revolutionised the e-Commerce adoption process in SMEs. However, extant research into this area is nascent and there is a dearth of knowledge regarding how SMEs in developing countries enact and apply this phenomenon. This study explains how e-commerce entrepreneurship using SMN is conceptualised and applied in SMEs, and highlights factors that influence e-commerce innovation. The study provides a theoretical lens to increase the understanding of an ecommerce entrepreneurship process using a Contextualism theory. The study showcases how e-commerce using Facebook can be portrayed in a developing country context.

The final paper in this issue by Harrison et al examines entrepreneurial leadership and related skills, which are important for success in a developing economy environment. The focus of this research was on entrepreneurial leadership within the retail pharmacy sector in Nigeria. Its results provide an empirical, skill-based framework on entrepreneurial leadership in a developing economy, a subject area for which there exists a lack of background literature. In practice, the findings serve as a useful reference for practitioners and policy makers of the skills and other factors required for people to succeed as entrepreneurial leaders.

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